

The Cambridge Perspective - A Manifesto

Art Artists Community Place Change



Art and Artists at the Heart of Community

Cambridge City Council
March 2022

Introduction

Cambridge City Council has taken a national lead in its approach to the commissioning of public art and has achieved an impressive legacy with demonstrated benefits to the city and people. Public art has been supported through robust Planning policy, guidance, and processes and with expertise to oversee its development and delivery. A wide range of permanent, and temporary and process-led works have been developed with communities and these have helped shape the public realm and also played a role in integrating existing and new communities; contributing to the quality of life in the City and bringing social benefits.

This impressive record of Public Art makes a compelling case for the ongoing role of the cultural sector and artists in shaping our City and supports the continuation of the Council's Public Art Policy. The Council is committed to continuing to be at the forefront of public art commissioning and supporting projects throughout the city in delivering its vision to offer cultural experiences, which create outstanding communities and places by joining the best contemporary public art practice to community engagement, architecture, landscape and urban design.

The City has a vision to shape and improve the experience of the City as a place of creativity and innovation that offers a high quality of life and contributes to Cambridge's built and natural environment, living culture and heritage.

The Council will review and update its Public Art Policy and processes to redefine how it will go about supporting and commissioning future public art. The new adopted policy will reflect and build upon past experience through evaluation and will promote works that reflect the importance of culture to the City and its communities.

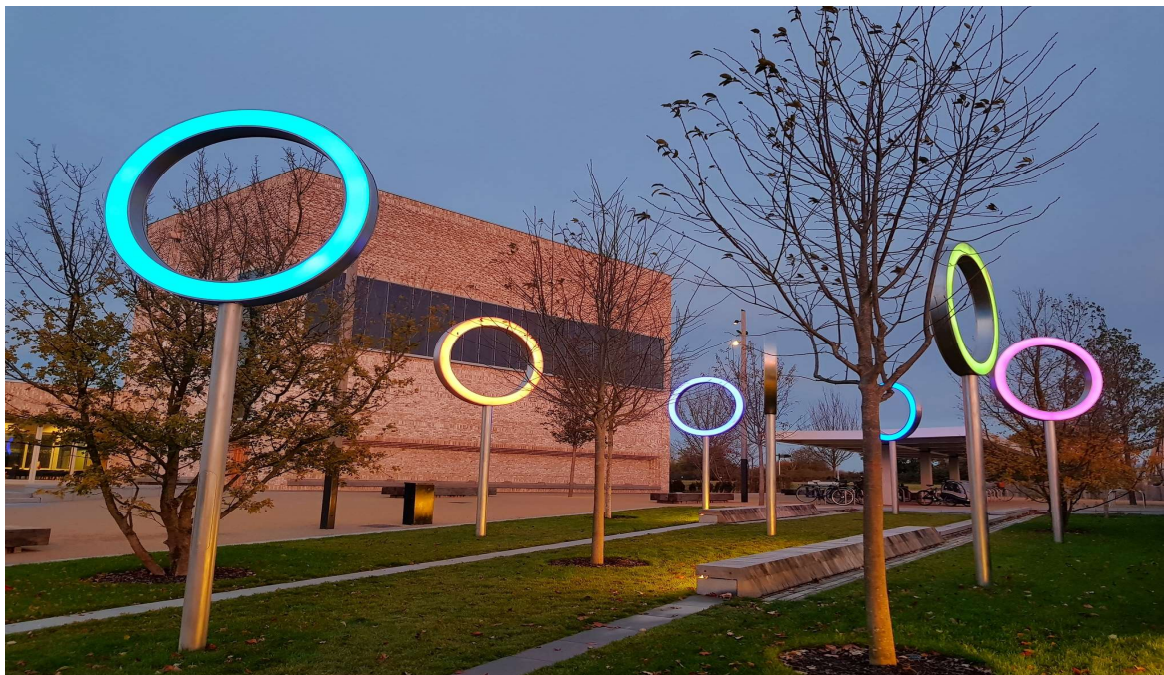
This Manifesto is a public declaration of the Council's intentions for public art commissioning and is offered as a conversation starter, a reminder of the benefits of public art and the achievements so far; it demonstrates the City's commitment to deliver new public art and its support of best practice in commissioning.



Very broadly public art can be understood as a process of engaging artists' creative ideas in the public realm and with the community. Public Art is not a distinct art form but refers to permanent, temporary or event-based works of art in a variety of media created for the public realm. Successful Public Art demonstrates ambition and innovation, and is relevant to its context, engages people and contributes to civic identity. The only constant element of public art is that it is community or site specific.

Art and art practice continually evolve. For example, digital and web-based projects are as valid as physical works; traditional, contemporary, and experimental work should all be supported. Public art projects can be informed by social activity; where the art can often involve works that are temporary and related to local stories and history and aimed at community building. Public art can also be purely process-led where taking part is the outcome. These types of projects directly engage with a diverse audience about issues directly relevant to their lives. Engaging with one off projects can have significant impact and the Council has committed to and will continue to support such commissions. Opportunities for public art commissioning in Cambridge have sought to connect people and place and enhance the community's experience of the City at both a local and citywide level.

Cambridge, as a City, is now in a position where it can and should celebrate its achievements' in public art commissioning and the rich cultural and community legacies that have been created. Reflecting on these achievements, the Council commits to build upon them and to continue to support cultural experiences in the public realm by ensuring artists are at the heart of policy and process and can respond and contribute to community, place and change.



The Cambridge Perspective – A commitment to Art, Artists, Community, Place and Change

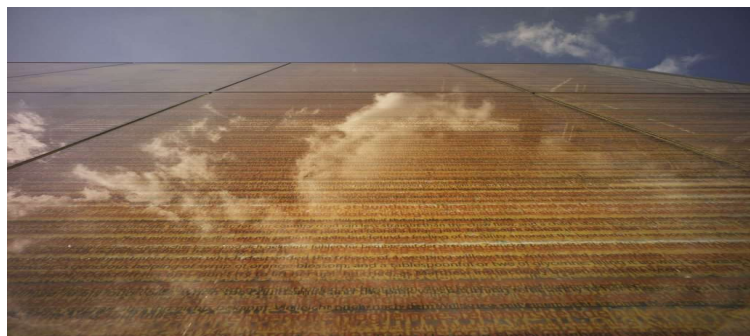
The following are the key strategic objectives that the Council has supported in public art commissioning and will continue to support in the future.

Art and Artists

The Vision: To put art and artists at the heart of the process to create public art of high quality, which engages people, is relevant to places and people's lives

The Council will:

- continue to commission ambitious projects that capture the public's imagination and embed public art into the fabric of the City and ensure that art and artists are at the heart of the process.
- update its Public Art Policy to ensure that criteria and processes are clear, provide support and commissioning guidance with expertise; ensure that budgets are set through knowledge and timeframes are realistic.
- lead by example within its own public art projects.
- ensure artists are treated as professionals in their field and have equal value as other members of a project team. A 'Rules of Engagement' have been developed to endorse and support their role in a project team. (Appendix 1)
- continue to support collaborations between artists, creative agencies, designers, researchers, participants and companies across the city.
- embrace contemporary art practices and be open to engaging with artists whose practice is experimental. The benefit of work that is temporary, process-led or socially engaged will be promoted and the notion of permanence as providing a better quality of art and/or stronger legacy will be challenged, where appropriate. The time for public art as decoration or embellishment has passed.
- ensure that public art can be sustainably maintained for the enjoyment of the community for the lifespan of the work.



Art and Community

The Vision: To engage local people in the planning, design and animation of their environments and social spaces through public art delivered via the development process and to encourage a greater sense of social cohesion and ownership of the public realm and public art. To enable Cambridge residents to experience high quality cultural activity and have the opportunity to develop themselves as makers, participants and audiences.

The Council will:

- ensure that public art is truly public and that projects have a demonstrable benefit to community, which includes community engagement. All public art should engage the community as a whole and be inclusive for all ages and address diversity, so that the community truly contributes to and values the city's culture and built and natural environments with integrity.
- engage with community stakeholders in the development of public art projects to build relationships and knowledge, which can inform the research for artists working on commissions.
- form partnerships with the cultural community in the city to exchange ideas and knowledge to develop a programme of progressive and high-quality public art.
- The Council believes in the dignity of all people and their right to equality of opportunity and commission opportunities will ensure diversity is a key part of the process, particularly in the artist procurement process. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be a priority.



Art and Place

The Vision: Public art can help create a high-quality public realm and improve environmental quality through the creation of artworks that provide visual and emotional delight. Public art commissions can animate Cambridge's public spaces and help to create unique spaces whether in the urban or natural environments, as well as create identity both at a local level and citywide with each artwork being specific to its location. The streets and open spaces of Cambridge offer excellent opportunities for the creative thinking of artists to interpret use, history, or a hidden narrative. Art and Place is not about using public art to 'decorate' or embellish public spaces.

The Council will:

- support artists working in public space to create works, which genuinely respond to place and are site specific. This is particularly important for development sites where a developer will be the commissioner and whom may have their own ideas of what public art is or should be and, which do not benefit place or community.
- provide support and expertise to artists to ensure that all public art proposals in the public realm demonstrate best practice and involve progressive contemporary art practices.



Art and Change

The Vision: Public art can be used as a conduit for community engagement and participation (as outlined in Art and Community) and especially in recognition that changes are taking place in the city. This is particularly important in Cambridge, with the changes that the growth agenda is bringing to the city, as well as changes that will happen because of climate change and the biodiversity emergency. Public art should support and enable critical debate, which addresses the impact of growth, climate change and the biodiversity emergency. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed and increased community need for and use of open spaces whether it is formal open space or incidental spaces on a journey; creative engagement and animation of spaces is a vital response to this change.

Cambridge is going through an unprecedented period of growth and as such public art that enables critical debate around the impact of growth will encourage proposals, which integrate new and existing communities, will be supported. The Council:

- supports public art commissions, which enable critical debate on issues such as Climate Change and the biodiversity emergency.
- is committed to minimising environmental impact on the City. Public Art projects that protect the environment are encouraged, as are those that utilise natural sustainable materials and are cared for without undue use of resources.
- acknowledges that the Covid 19 pandemic has increased community need for and use of open spaces whether it is formal open space or incidental space and will support projects, which animate these spaces and provide moments of delight and surprise.



Promotion

Currently, in Cambridge there is an unprecedented investment in and support for public art that has either been delivered or is in the process of being developed. Outside of London, nowhere else in the country has so many artists working in the public realm. Some of the world's finest artists are working in Cambridge but this work is not being properly recorded or promoted. The Council has developed a Communications Plan and will commit to actively promoting public art through a website, the media and cultural organisations.

- The Council commits to more actively promoting public art in the City and beyond.



Appendix 1: Artist/Developer/Design Team ‘Rules of Engagement’

Artist/Developer/Design Team ‘Rules of Engagement’

Having a good artist is of equal value as having a good architect. With this in mind, we outline below the essential rules of engagement to be established with the developer/commissioner and the design team in advance of a commission:

- The intention and remit for the artist as a member of the team must be established from the outset.
- The whole team must be aware of this and wish to support the collaboration; they must understand it is an important part of the client’s ambition for the project and not a whim that they can be talked out of later.
- The criteria for the artist’s selection, and how it is managed is vital to a successful project. People must be able and willing to work together, design team representatives must be actively involved in the selection process.
- The artist must have sufficient status in the team to have authority.
- The project manager must be sympathetic to the collaborative process and have an understanding of the intentions behind it.
- The degree of control the artist has in the design and implementation of their work must be established at the outset and agreed with the artist. The more control and involvement an artist has the better the work.
- Overall responsibility for the artist’s element will remain with the main contractor who is responsible for delivering the scheme safely, on cost and to programme.

The budget for the project must be sufficient to fund adequate time for the both the artist and the design team to establish some mutual understanding and trust and for them to get to know one another and each other’s work.

Appendix 2 Images and Further Information

Front Cover

- I. Hunch, Emma Smith - An installation & performance on Parker's Piece
<https://www.emma-smith.com/works/hunch/>
<https://t.co/9H4exPoyNh?amp=1>
 - II. The Green and The Gardens, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Ryan Gander
<https://cambridge-biomedical.com/public-art-cambridge/commission/the-green-and-the-gardens/>
<https://t.co/t35rNU4EBj?amp=1>
- P 2. Artist in Residence at Trumpinton Meadows, Caroline Wright -
<http://www.carolinewright.com/portfolio/trumpinton-meadows/>
- P3. Richard Of York Gave Battle In Vain, by David Batchelor.
<http://www.nwcambridgeart.com/commissions/eddington-david-batchelor-commission/>
- P4. In Other Words, Vong Phaophanit and Claire Oboussier, Cambridge Assessment
<https://atopia.org.uk/commission/in-other-words/>
- P5. Cinder by Umbrellium at Trumpington Community College. Cinder takes the form of a virtual interactive mascot, she responds in real-time to sustainability <https://t.co/Y4mLhkq39f?amp=1>
- P6.
- I. A Wary Heracles meets Galatea' by Matthew Darbyshire, Cambridge North Station
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_10or3B5tlo
 - II. The Green and The Gardens, Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Ryan Gander
<https://cambridge-biomedical.com/public-art-cambridge/commission/the-green-and-the-gardens/>
<https://t.co/t35rNU4EBj?amp=1>
 - III. The Barnwell Sentence, Lusy Skaer <https://futurecity.co.uk/portfolio/the-barnwell-sentence/>
 - IV. Fata Morgana Teahouse, Eddington, Wolfgang Winter and Berthold Hörbelt,
<http://www.nwcambridgeart.com/commissions/fata-morgana-teahouse-pixel-wall/>
- P7.
- I. Pixel wall, Eddington, Wolfgang Winter and Berthold Hörbelt,
<http://www.nwcambridgeart.com/commissions/fata-morgana-teahouse-pixel-wall/>
 - II. Bird Screens, Clay Farm, Nils Norman <http://www.dismalgarden.com/projects/birdscreens>
 - III. Artist in Residence at Trumpinton Meadows, Caroline Wright -
<http://www.carolinewright.com/portfolio/trumpinton-meadows/>
 - IV. Erratics, New Museums site, Simon Faithfull <https://www.simonfaithfull.org/works/erratics/>
- P8. Let Us Be All We Can Be, Newmarket Road, Mark Titchner <http://marktitchner.com/work/let-us-be-all-we-can-be/>

Back Cover

- I. The Darwin Green Sweet Pea, Patricia Mackinnon-Day <https://www.mackinnon-day.com/projects/darwin-green/> A Cabinet of Curiosities at Darwin Green by Jane Watt
<http://www.thecabinetofcuriosities.org.uk/>

